

THE DAILY HAZARD



GMB commemorative balloons at Parliament.



Ann Elvin (RSG) and Tony O'Brien (CSC) making the point of the protest to Jenny Bacon, HSE boss.



RSG members Maureen Brennan and Ann Elvin supporting Lesley Hammonds at the HSE.

Workers' Memorial Day

April 28th 1995, London

Members of the Relatives Support Group (RSG), the Construction Safety Campaign (CSC), Hazards Campaign and the GMB marked this year's Workers' Memorial Day by supporting two main events in London.

Lesley Hammonds whose son Tim, 29, was killed while working on London's underground and Marianne Wynne whose husband Joe, early 40's, was killed in a fall on a construction site, laid a commemorative wreath outside the new Health & Safety Executive headquarters. Jenny Bacon, the new boss of the HSE, and Stuart Natrass, HSE head of construction, met the groups and accepted letters of protest from the RSG and CSC. Local MP, Liberal Democrat Simon Hughes, supported a number of relatives at the protest.

At the Houses of Parliament, Ian McCartney, Labour spokesperson on health and safety spoke of the preventable nature of workplace deaths, accidents and ill health. He then released over 550 balloons, each one commemorating a GMB member killed at work in recent years.



CSC supporters protesting at the HSE.



Marianne Wynne laying the wreath outside the HSE headquarters.



Ian McCartney MP releasing commemorative balloons at parliament.

INSIDE

Deregulation threat shifts to Europe	2
TUC talks to the grass roots	2
Factsheet: Air, light & temperature	3
Centre news: asbestos book appeal	4

New attack on Euro Safety law

Deregulation of health and safety law is back on the agenda again but this time on a European scale. European Union policy on health and safety for the next five years is in danger of being watered down so that market forces become a major consideration and health protection at work takes a back seat.

John Edmonds, GMB General Secretary, warned safety reps at the National Hazards Conference in April that John Major now has an ally in the German chancellor Helmut Kohl on the topic of deregulation. Union activists heard Mr. Edmonds condemn as "a bad student essay" a report from a group of eight industrialists published by the Department of Trade and In-

dustry in March.

On the basis of two meetings, a group of seven companies and the CBI decided that European health and safety regulations, negotiated with their participation just a few years ago, are preventing European employers from duplicating the working conditions of south east Asia and Latin America. The group is co-chaired by Francis Maude MP, the UK's Deregulation Task Force Chairman.

Describing the Hazards Campaign as indispensable, Edmonds called on the delegates to get involved in the coming fight to defend European Union health and safety standards.

"John Major has set up this

group to give him a politically sympathetic report. It is no surprise, therefore, that they have said exactly what he wanted to hear. This is a shabby trick to try and weaken health and safety law by the back door" said Mr. Edmonds.

A draft document setting out the European Commission's fourth programme on safety, hygiene and health at work states as one of its key principles "the need to ensure that actions undertaken on health and safety are designed to support the competitiveness of enterprises, particularly small to medium enterprises (SME's)." If this wording is adopted then all European Union states will be given the green light to argue that health and safety laws are reducing the ability of employers to be competitive in the market place.

The UK government say that failing to act to prevent workplace disease and injuries costs UK employers £4 billion to £9 billion

a year, or five to ten per cent of their gross profits. The cost to the country is far higher. "I doubt if many managements understand what accidents actually cost," said the Chair of the Health and Safety Commission in February 1994. Obviously John Major doesn't listen to the HSC.

In June, the EU will be setting the budget for its health and safety programme, known as SAFE. Rumour has it that the provisional budget of 10 million ecu is being whittled away. You can write to your MEP supporting the SAFE budget, before the middle of June.

Deregulation Now: a report by the Anglo German Deregulation Group from EC Section, Deregulation Unit, DTI, 123 Victoria St, London SW1E 6RB; 0171-215-6394

The Costs to the British Economy of Work Accidents and Work Related Ill Health HSE 1994, £13 from HSE Books.

TUC raises health and safety game

Hazard campaigners and safety representatives welcomed both the opportunity to participate in two high profile TUC conferences and the publication of a new TUC book and campaign on occupational asthma. Two conferences in one month at Congress House gave safety representatives and activists the chance to react to TUC initiatives and to discuss the way forward.

Over 200 attended the TUC National Trade Union Conference on Workplace Health & Safety held in March. A packed hall heard John Monks, TUC General Secretary, say "Health and safety is the number one concern of working people today". The conference reported on responses to the consultation document

"Setting the Safety Agenda".

Later in March, the South East Region of the TUC organised and hosted a conference on Repetition Strain Injury (RSI). This lively conference involved an estimated 80 participants.

Speakers included Tim Gopsil of the National Union of Journalists, who spoke of the continuing work by the NUJ on RSI despite the loss of the Rafiq Mughal case. Hugh MacGrillen, London Hazards Centre, spoke of the growing incidence of RSI as part of a wider problem arising from changes to the way work is organised.

Workshops examined the impact of New Management Methods on the incidence of RSI,



Alan J.P. Dalton

Owen Tudor of the TUC and session chair Shonagh Methven of the Hazards Centre

negotiated agreements, RSI assessments, and the representation of RSI sufferers by safety reps.

Graham Petersen, the conference organiser and co-ordinator of the "Don't Suffer in Silence" campaign in the South East made a plea for activists to build on the work of the conference. Despite plans to shift the emphasis of TUC campaign work to other areas, the clear message from the conference was that it would be foolhardy to wind down such a successful campaign.

Finally, the TUC has jointly published with Sheffield Occupational Health Project a book on occupational asthma, called "Asthma at work". They have also launched an educational and preventative campaign against the condition with the National Asthma Campaign.

Occupational asthma is current-

ly the only treatable chronic disease of the industrial world which is on the increase. The book shows how workplace factors may account for one fifth of adult asthmas, up to ten times more than previous official statistics have indicated.

The book and the campaign were featured on the first programme broadcast by TUTV, the TUC's television series broadcast on BBC TV aimed at union members throughout Britain.

"Better Safety Standards: Towards a New Agenda for Safety at Work." Available from Trades Union Congress, Congress House Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS.

"Asthma at Work: causes, effects and what to do about them." Available from FAO Gill Brent, Sheffield Occupational Health Project, Mudford's Building, 37 Exchange St, Sheffield S2 5TR. Tel: 0114 275 5760.



Alan J.P. Dalton

The NUJ has been in the forefront of RSI union action. Tim Gopsil, editor of The Journalist, with their current advice booklet.

AIR, LIGHT AND TEMPERATURE

Temperature, humidity, ventilation and lighting are major determinants of comfort in the workplace. Departures from satisfactory conditions can have harmful health effects. These hazards are covered by the Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare (WHSW) Regulations 1992, which come fully into force on 1 January 1996. They replace sections of the Factories Act and Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act.

The Regulations cover all workplaces, except ships, moving vehicles, mines, quarries and building sites. This factsheet describes the legal requirements and good conditions for the protection of comfort and health for temperature, humidity, ventilation and lighting (see also *Daily Hazard* No. 30 for a factsheet on hot working conditions).

Temperatures

(WHSW Regulation 7). The law requires only that a reasonable temperature shall be maintained in indoor workplaces during working hours. There is neither a maximum nor a minimum temperature specified in the new legislation; the minimum temperature specified in the old legislation has now been abolished. Fixed heating systems should work such that injurious or offensive fumes, etc. do not enter the workplace. Portable heaters should not produce harmful or offensive fumes.

Combustion heaters must have a sufficient air supply for complete combustion.

The Regulations require a sufficient number of thermometers to be available to enable the temperature to be measured throughout the workplace. The Approved Code of Practice (ACoP) says thermometers need not be in every room.

There is advice in the ACoP stating the minimum temperature in workrooms should be 16°C, or if severe physical effort is required, 13°C. This advice does not apply where it would be impractical to maintain such temperatures, e.g. where food is being kept cold. There is no advice on an appropriate maximum temperature.

The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) has published design criteria for temperature in buildings used for work. CIBSE recommends a range from 13°C for heavy work to 20°C for sedentary work. The World Health Organisation recommends 24°C as the maximum temperature for working in comfort. Beyond this dehydration, heat stress and ultimately heat stroke can occur. Cold temperatures affect dexterity and mobility and may increase physical and visual strain, with added problems for people with muscular pain, arthritis and heart conditions.

The maintenance of a comfortable temperature should be a matter of local negotiation and agreement. This should cover matters such as providing air cooling plant, siting workstations away from sources of radiant heat, the provision of local heating or cooling, insulation, shading windows, the provision of hot or cold drinks, and entitlement to suitable protective clothing or rest periods.

Where necessary, suitable systems of work should be introduced to limit exposure. A maximum and minimum go-home temperature should be introduced at which workers can stop work and/or leave the workplace. There is no legal right to leave the workplace as a result of extremes of heat

and cold, unless there is serious and imminent danger.

Humidity

There is no specific legislation dealing with humidity, apart from in humid factories, but its proper regulation is essential for comfort in all workplaces. Humidity is the amount of moisture in the air; at saturation point the relative humidity is 100%. Low levels of humidity can exacerbate respiratory and skin conditions. There may also be a build up of static electricity in dry air resulting in electrostatic shocks. For most applications, the relative humidity should be between 40% and 70%. Carpeted buildings with underfloor heating need relative humidity towards the higher end of the range. Humidifiers, intended to moisten the air must be properly cleaned and maintained if they are not to become a source of bacteria and moulds.

Ventilation

(WHSW Regulation 6). The law says only that every enclosed workplace must have effective and suitable ventilation which provides a sufficient quantity of fresh or purified air. Ventilation equipment must give an audible or visual warning when it fails where there is a health and safety factor. The Regulation applies to general ventilation but not to local exhaust ventilation which is dealt with by other legislation.

Fresh air is needed for respiration, to dilute and remove impurities and odours and to dissipate excess heat. The build up of impure air, along with other environmental factors, can result in sick building syndrome, whereby occupants suffer respiratory and other illnesses.

In many cases, windows or other openings will provide sufficient ventilation. If they don't mechanical ventilation should be introduced. Replacement air should be free of impurities as far as possible. Air inlets for ventilation should be sited where they can draw in fresh air; they should

therefore not be sited near any source of fumes or other impurities.

Recirculated air (e.g. in air conditioning systems) should be adequately filtered to remove impurities. The purified air should have some fresh air added to it and systems should be designed to allow this to happen. Mechanical ventilation systems should be regularly and properly cleaned, tested and maintained. According to CIBSE, the fresh air supply rate should not fall below 8 and may be as high as 25 litres per second per person depending on how crowded the conditions are and whether smoking is permitted. Steps should also be taken to ensure that workers are not exposed to draughts.

Lighting

(WHSW Regulation 8). The Regulations state that every workplace shall have suitable and sufficient lighting and that it shall, as far as is reasonably practicable, be by natural lighting.

Lighting should be sufficient to enable people to work, use facilities and move about safely and without experiencing eye-strain. Exposure to fluorescent lighting is associated with headache, eye-strain, eye irritation, fatigue and increased stress and accidents. Exposure is also associated with the onset of skin conditions and there is growing evidence of a link with the incidence of skin cancer. Some people become allergic to fluorescent lighting and more sensitive to sunlight. Flickering lighting may produce hyperactivity. A shortage of natural light can lead to seasonal affective disorder (SAD), resulting in a range of mental and physical illnesses.

Good lighting conditions involve:

- maximum provision of natural daylight
- avoidance of fluorescent lighting where possible
- maximum control by individual workers of ambient lighting including the provision of desk light and

uplighters

- selection of suitable lighting for the task to be performed
- avoidance of dazzle and glare, by repositioning of lights if necessary and by the introduction of non-reflective surfaces
- suitable lighting for both indoor and external traffic routes
- suitable positioning of light switches
- immediate repair or replacement of all faulty lights, light fittings and cabling.

There shall be suitable and sufficient emergency lighting where workers are especially exposed to danger if artificial lighting fails.

Detailed guidance on the selection of a safe lighting system can be found in the HSE publication *Lighting at Work* [HS(G) 38, available from HSE Publications].

Action

Proper attention to temperature, humidity, ventilation and lighting lead to a safe, comfortable and efficient workplace. Employers commonly avoid their legal duties in this area as the laws are non-specific and very rarely enforced. Workers can protect their conditions by

- keeping a record of unusual or excessive conditions
- carrying out regular inspections
- ensuring all ill-health attributed to workplace conditions is reported in the accident book
- calling in the enforcement authorities if extreme conditions persist
- organising through their union to demand satisfactory conditions are introduced
- ensuring employers also discharge their responsibilities to non-employees on their premises

Further Information

The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE), 222 Balham High Rd, London SW12 9BS. Tel: 0181 675 5211. CIBSE publish documents on standards of lighting the workplace etc. which are useful to Safety Representatives negotiating workplace standards.

Centre's funding suffers in Baring crash Asbestos appeal

The collapse of Barings Bank has cost the London Hazards Centre dearly, losing us anticipated funding for one part time worker and for a new book on asbestos.

We have had to suspend one vacant part time post, fortunately without a redundancy. We are currently busy seeking alternative funding to re-instate the post as soon as possible, but this is unlikely to become a reality until 1996 at the earliest.

Also we do not have enough money for our proposed asbestos publication which we were to publish later this year. We are appealing for your finan-

cial support to ensure this much needed publication is produced this year.

Figures show the current number of annual deaths from asbestos is much higher than the authorities predicted and is set to go on rising over the next 30 years. This is no surprise to us as we predicted this alarming death toll ten years ago and we still say official estimates are too low.

In the light of this we have taken one risk that we hope you are all going to support. We have decided to stick with our plan to publish an asbestos handbook this year. This book, on tackling

the deadly problem of workplace and environment asbestos, will be an invaluable resource for community groups, parent-teacher associations, trade union branches, workers and tenants.

Market Sharkey has been commissioned to prepare this book by October 1995. Margaret used to work for the Trade Union Studies Information Unit in Newcastle and is well known to Hazards Campaigners.

Our affiliates have already begun to respond to our April appeal letter asking for their financial support to cover the costs of publication and we hope

to stay on target for our October publication date — but we need the donations to continue. Please support the appeal. While all donations are welcome we ask our affiliated groups to make donations as substantial as they dare. Alternatively, pre-publication orders for the book are another way of ensuring we stay on target over the coming months.

There is an appeal form inside this copy of the *Daily Hazard*. Should you wish to discuss your donation or how to make your pre-publication order ring 0171 267 3387 and speak to the duty advice worker. We would very much appreciate it if you could take copies of our appeal leaflet to circulate to your union branches, regional committees, trades councils etc.

Do you like the Daily Hazard?

We would like to know what your opinion of the *Daily Hazard* is. We have been considering changing the format and frequency of our newsletter. Our aims are to improve the service to affiliates; maintain and attract more affiliations; and to make the work more manageable for us, possibly by spreading it further throughout the year.

But before we go any further, we want to know what you think we should do. Are you happy with

the *Daily Hazard* as it is? If not, what changes would you make?

One option we are considering at the moment is:

- reduce the current four page format to two pages, hazards news and casework on one side and a factsheet on the other
- increase frequency of mailings to six per year

What do you think? Inside this issue is a questionnaire and we would appreciate it if you gave

us some feedback by filling it in and sending it back to us with your comments. Feel free to call us to give us your opinion on the phone.

As part of the strategy outlined above, we have decided to maintain affiliation fees at the current level for another year and to advertise more fully the facility for affiliated organisations to receive up to ten copies of our newsletter without extra cost.

PUBLICATIONS

- ▲ **Hard Labour: Stress, ill-health and hazardous employment practices.** August 1994. £6.95.
- ▲ **VDU Work and the Hazards to Health.** August 1993. £6.50
- ▲ **Protecting the Community: A worker's guide to health and safety in Europe.** May 1992. £9.95
- ▲ **Basic Health and Safety: Workers' rights and how to win them.** June 1991. £6.00
- ▲ **Repetition Strain Injuries: Hidden harm from over-use.** January 1988. £3.00*/£6.00
- ▲ **Out in the Open** (supplement to *Repetition Strain Injuries*). January 1993. £1.00 (free with *Repetition Strain Injuries*).
- ▲ **Sick Building Syndrome: Causes, effects and control.** June 1990. £4.50
- ▲ **Fluorescent Lighting: A health hazard overhead.** March 1987. £2.00*/£5.00
- ▲ **Toxic Treatments: Wood preservative hazards at work and in the home.** January 1989. £5.95
- ▲ **After the Sprayer: investigation and treatment of ill-health caused by wood preservatives and how to get help.** January 1992. Factsheet. £1.00
- ▲ **Factpack:** Set of factsheets from the *Daily Hazard*. £5.00
- ▲ **Daily Hazard** complete run: £25.00

* Price to community/tenants/union groups.

Add £1.00 post and packing up to the first £10.00 worth of books, add an additional £1.00 up to each subsequent £10.00 worth. Discounts for 10 or more copies. All orders must be accompanied by a cheque made payable to London Hazards Centre.

HAZLIT is London Hazards Centre's library database on the Poptel Geonet electronic mail system. For information about online access, contact the Centre.

Hot, Hot, Hot

If the first week in May is anything to go by, we could be in for some blisteringly hot weather this summer. Accident rates will increase and work related sickness will rise because of hot working conditions — unless steps are taken to reduce or control the problem.

The London Hazards Centre previously published a fact sheet on the topic of "Hot working conditions" in *Daily Hazard* No. 30. It contains useful information on the hazards of hot work and what can be done to reduce the risk of harm to workers.

For a free copy, write to us at the Centre, enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope and we will send it to you.

Donors

The Centre Management Committee and Staff would like to thank all those who responded to our recent appeal. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Over £100

CWU Romford Amal Branch

Up to £100

Becky Allen
Comet Nursery School
Sarah Cripps
Ingrid Evans
East Anglia Daily Times News Chapel
For the Safety of the Home and Family
GMB/APEX London College of Printing
GMB/APEX Welling Branch
Martin Harvey
Cyril Jones
NUCPS London North & West Branch (Customs & Excise Group)
Aubrey Pope
G. Potter
Rosemary Stratton
TCWU Branch 1/1495
West Thames College: Trade Union Studies Centre
Jane Wibberley

Remember the London Hazards Centre has moved. Our new address is below.



Interchange Studios
Dalby Street
London NW5 3NQ
tel: 0171-267 3387

London Hazards Centre Trust is funded by

